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ABSTRACT

Middle school students need to attain well in the affective dimension in reading. Affective objectives emphasize, among other things, students achieving quality attitudes toward reading. Quality literature might well assist the emerging adolescent to enjoy and grow in reading skills. Learners should have ample opportunities to choose reading materials from a variety of trade books. Students develop their own interests in selecting trade books for sequential progress. Middle school students need opportunities to experience a seminar approach in the reading curriculum. Reading and the affective dimension have a central role to fulfill for emerging adolescents as they find their niches and roles in life's diverse manifestations. (RS)

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THE AFFECTIVE DIMENSION IN MIDDLE SCHOOL READING

Middle school students need to attain well in the affective dimension in reading. Affective objectives emphasize, among other things, students achieving quality attitudes toward reading. With wholesome attitudes toward learning, the emerging adolescent has a more optimal opportunity to achieve well in knowledge and skills. It is difficult to separate knowledge, skills, and attitudes, three categories of objectives, since each tends to interact with the other domain.

The Emerging Adolescent

The emerging adolescent explores the world in terms of securing values, beliefs, and interests. He/she is bombarded with diverse models in society, be it in movies, television, news accounts, or observing the human condition in life. Seemingly, an open-ended view of life is in the offing. The middle school student can then select from among alternative attitudinal systems. Ample opportunities then need to be available to explore, discover, and analyze. Thus, the emerging adolescent faces eternal questions such as

1. What are my strengths and weaknesses?
2. Which beliefs are vital to possess in school and in society?
3. Which purposes in life should I pursue?
4. What is ultimately good in life?
5. Who am I and what should I do in life?

Quality literature might well assist the emerging adolescent to enjoy and grow in reading skills. Within this framework, knowledge is acquired. The three categories of objectives -- knowledge, skills, and attitudes -- become one, not separate entities.

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Learners should have ample opportunities to choose reading materials, from among alternative trade books. The content should relate to diverse topics. The middle school student might then select sequential enjoyable trade books to read. Subject matter must meet personal interests of emerging adolescents. Facts, concepts, and generalizations acquired might well guide middle school students to solve personal and social problems. A literature based reading curriculum can provide models for student emulation. Values may be considered, analyzed, and synthesized. Exploration of values vicariously permits youth to evaluate beliefs without experiencing the harmful and the negative.

Middle school teachers may need to select a few trade books for students not able to settle down with appropriate reading materials. He/she needs to know these learners thoroughly to choose the trade book, containing relevant content on the appropriate reading level. Otherwise, the middle school student should select sequential trade books to read. The role of the teacher is to have a classroom with a stimulating learning environment which stimulates and motivates the emerging adolescent to read, develop, and grow.

Trade books for middle school student selection emphasize a psychological curriculum whereby sequence and order of experiences resides within the learner, not the teacher and not within textbooks. The student needs to perceive relationship of previously acquired knowledge with that of the new facts, concepts, and generalizations to be gained. Growth in the affective domain accrues with student selection of sequential reading materials.

Pertaining to reading in a content area, Naylor and Diem [1] wrote:

> Learning is an interactive process. To learn, students draw on what they already know, use it to derive meaning from new experiences, and reshape that knowledge to encode it effectively in long-term memory. The more opportunities you provide for your students to process information actively, the greater the likelihood that meaningful learning will result. When you view reading and writing as thinking processes, as opposed to discrete skills to be mastered, and when you deal with them in a functional context, they become integral to sound social studies instruction.
>
> Many elementary and middle school teachers express concern about deficiencies in the reading abilities of their students. How well a student reads correlates highly with the level of success he or she experiences in social studies. When dealing with reading in a social studies context, the goal is helping students read to learn, not learn to read.

Quality Literature in the Curriculum

Quality literature for students contains

1. perceived purpose. The emerging adolescent then perceives reasons for reading. Reading materials center upon discovering the self with its incentives, stimuli, and rewards. Intrinsic motivation is important since the desire for learning comes from within. Thus, learning from reading is its very own reward.
2. interesting subject matter. The middle school student and the trade books chosen become one, not separate entities. Interest makes for effort in learning. The emerging adolescent then attends to content read. Distractions become rare.
3. meaningful content. The middle school student needs to understand and attach meaning to acquired facts, concepts, and generalizations. To achieve meaning, the learner sequences his/her own readiness to benefit from a selected trade book.
4. provision for individual differences. With self-selection and pacing, the student chooses reading materials which assist in achieving optimally.
5. a guidance resource. The trade books contain models for student emulation and analyzation.

Emerging adolescents attempt to develop purpose for life and living. Reasons need to be found to achieve zest and joy in life's endeavors. Life itself proposes purposes, to find the environment, filled with goals to be achieved. Middle school students need to enjoy

the opportunities that life has to offer. With its ups and downs, living and life has its diverse manifestations. Thus, the learner might well find purpose in life through bibliotherapy. Joys and difficulties in life are faced by characters in bibliotherapy trade books. The young adolescent may then identify with diverse characters who may have physical handicaps or live under very stressful conditions. Characters in trade books emphasizing bibliotherapy reveal feelings in developing means to cope with problematic situations. Empathy can also be developed with characters and situations in bibliotherapy.

Students develop their own interests in selecting trade books for sequential progress. Diverse categories of books are available such as biographies, autobiographies, tall tales, poetry, mystery stories, fables, myths, and fairy tales for students to choose from based on interest factors. Being thoroughly engrossed in reading where the learner secures subject matter due to interest factors is a psychological factor. Interest is indeed a powerful consideration in student learning. Middle school students need to develop and maintain a high degree of interest in reading. Lifelong learning emphasizes attaining and refining reading skills and attitudes.

Literature read by middle school students might well provide a springboard for creative endeavors, such as writing prose and poetry, as well as engage in art work. From literature stimuli, emerging adolescents may

1. write a different beginning or ending.
2. write related couplets, triplets, quatrains, limericks, free verse, haiku, tanka, and diamante poetry.
3. make puppets and marionettes to role play what has been read.

4. develop dioramas, pencil sketches, and water color paintings to reveal comprehension from reading.
5. complete props for pantomime, creative dramatics, and formal dramatization experiences.

Products and process developed in creative endeavors need to emphasize originality, uniqueness, and novelty of expression. Effort in each project should stress perseverance, completion, appreciation, and positive attitudes. Respect for others and their contributions is always important as an affective objective in reading.

Middle school students need opportunities to experience a seminar approach in the reading curriculum. Within a small group of five to six emerging adolescents, the teacher may lead a depth discussion on one or more paperbacks each has read, emphasizing quality literature. Depth, rather than survey, methods of discussion are utilized. Topics for discussion within the literary selection read could include characterization, setting, plot, theme, irony, and point of view. Each student should have ample opportunites to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize content read. Higher levels of cognition are to be emphasized. Middle school students may wish to explore "what if" questions such as what if the leading character were living today (instead of a much earlier period of time), how would the plot have changed in the selection read? Enjoyment and appreciation are two major concepts to emphasize in the literature curriculum. Challenging lively discussions in a quality learning environment enhances the emerging adolescent's success in developing well in the attitudinal dimension in reading.

In Closing

Middle school students need a literature curriculum which assists in answering personal questions and problems. Emerging adolescents are viewing life in terms of exploring, discovering, and finding values, goals, and aims in life. Certainly, reading and the affective dimension have a central role to fulfill for emerging adolescents as they find their niches and roles in life's diverse manifestations. Harp and Brewer [2] wrote:

> In general, the theme, setting, plot, characterization, and style must be considered when choosing a book of fiction for classroom use. The theme must be one that is worthwhile. For example, many books have themes that help children better understand relationships, perseverance, honesty, or courage. Settings are important if they make the book more or less difficult to understand. A book set in another time or place, such as historical fiction, may require explanations or background knowledge in order to be comprehensible. The plot of the story must be lively. Most children enjoy action and a plot that moves along. The characterization must be such that children can relate to the characters in the book. Children need to be able to relate to the emotions of the characters and feel that their actions are plausible. Style is basically the quality of writing. It means that the author has interesting sentence patterns, chooses words and phrases carefully, paces the story appropriately, and writes so as not to distract the reader. Books should contain a quality of language and writing that will serve as models for children's writing. Good books also serve to increase children's vocabularies and understanding of figures of speech such as similies and metaphors.

Works Cited

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